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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BASRAH 000135

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [IR](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: BASRAH GOVERNOR ON NEW "ILLEGAL" SECURITY COMMITTEE AND
RECENT TRIP TO IRAN

REF: (A) BASRAH 132; (B) BASRAH 90

BASRAH 00000135 001.2 OF 002

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REASON: 1.4 (b)

¶1. (C) Summary. Basrah Governor Mohammed al-Wa'eli told the Regional Coordinator (RC) on August 21 that the Basrah security committee recently created by Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki and headed by Major General Ali Hammadi al-Musawi (ref A) is illegal and that he planned to visit the PM later this week to discuss its existence. He added that Hammadi's first action as head of the committee was to break Iraqi law by releasing seven detainees held in connection with the August 16 attack on the Basrah government building. Al-Wa'eli said that he had requested that legal action be instituted against the general for this illegal release. The governor also provided details about his recent seven-day official visit to Iran, which resulted in an agreement to combat smuggling and illegal travel across the Shatt al-Arab river and Iranian offers of trade and assistance. End Summary.

GOVERNOR SAYS SECURITY COMMITTEE IS ILLEGAL

¶2. (C) On August 21 Basrah Governor Mohammed al-Wa'eli told the RC that the Basrah security committee, headed by Major General Ali Hammadi al-Musawi, is "illegal" and that Hammadi broke the law by releasing seven detainees held in connection with the August 16 attack on Basrah's main government building. Stating that he would travel to Baghdad later this week to discuss the issue with the prime minister, al-Wa'eli explained that the security committee's authority under Hammadi was unconstitutional since it superseded his own. (Note. Al-Wa'eli said that he had planned to go to Baghdad on August 16 but was forced to cancel his plans when the government building was attacked. End note.)

¶3. (C) The governor said he made a written request to judicial authorities to "sue" Hammadi for ordering the release of the seven detainees held in the aftermath of the August 16 incident. He claimed that only three of the seven detainees were members of the Bani Asad tribe, and the other four were members of Sayed al-Shuhada and Thar Allah and alluded to Abdul Aziz al-Hakim as being "behind" the attack.

¶4. (C) The governor also accused Abdul Aziz al-Hakim and the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) of spreading rumors among the tribes of Basrah to stir up

opposition against the local government. He said that a settlement with the Bani Asad tribe would be reached within a few days and part of the settlement would be a tribal apology to the government. Al-Wa'eli went on to say that al-Hakim was trying to eliminate him because al-Wa'eli represents the opposition to the SCIRI plan to combine nine provinces in southern Iraq into a political unit led by al-Hakim. The governor said Basrah favors a plan to unite Basrah with the two southern provinces of Maysan and Dhi Qar.

GOVERNOR'S TRIP TO IRAN

15. (C) Al-Wa'eli provided details of his mid-August seven-day trip to Iran, an official visit at the invitation of Iran's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (Note. Iran recently reopened its Basrah consulate. See ref B.) The governor said that he and his 15-member delegation visited Ahvaz, Mashad and Qom, visited with the governors of Mashad and Qom, toured steel and petrochemical factories, and reached a security agreement with Iran. The agreement calls for cooperation to halt smuggling and unauthorized travel across the Shatt al-Arab river along the southern Iran-Iraq border. In addition, he said Iranian officials expressed a desire for stability in Iraq so that the Coalition Forces would depart. Describing the trip as successful, al-Wa'eli said Iran offered to help Basrah by building a bridge across the Shatt al-Arab and repaving roads in the Iraqi border crossing town of Shalamchah. He added that although the Iranians also proposed to rehabilitate factories in Basrah, that is a matter for the central government to handle.

16. (C) Comment. The governor clearly wanted to put his spin on the August 16 attack on the governorate building and to disabuse any notion it had resulted from any wrongdoing on his part. His antipathy to Abdul Aziz al-Hakim was more pronounced than it has been in the past, and this may be part of his strategy in advance of provincial elections. Badr and SCIRI are major rivals of Fadillah, and Wa'eli will try to portray them in the

BASRAH 00000135 002.2 OF 002

worst light possible.

17. (C) Comment continued: Governor Wa'eli, who agreed to the meeting only after repeated requests from the RC, did nothing to dispel his reputation as the person who controls the city with cunning, ruthlessness and corruption. Regardless of his reputation, the governor is an adept politician and an unscrupulous enemy to his political (and personal) opponents. Al-Wa'eli, though being attacked on all sides for his involvement in criminal schemes and for his inept administration, is a formidable adversary. End Comment.
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